

00:00 – Students arrive (5-10min)

- Name tags and mingle
 - *Hint: It's a great idea to have some snacks available at this time, and a couple of adults around to pass them out!*

00:10 – **Gather and Opening** (5-10min)

- M.C. introduces him/herself and the rest of the team follows. (*It helps to make it goofy by saying favorite ice cream or deodorant or something silly along those lines.*)
- Briefly introduce the retreat.
 - ***"Today we are going to learn and talk about freedom and sacrifice! I encourage you guys to really pay attention to the talks, let go and have fun during the activities, and really share and get involved in your small groups. This will be a really fun day if you let it be!"***

00:20 – **Small groups** (5-10min)

- Say, *"We are going to do a quick small group, just so you can get to know each other before we really get into the retreat."*
- Refer to **"Guidelines for Small Group Leaders"**
 - Remember, the main point is to just get them comfortable with one another and you.
 - This should "break the ice"!

00:30 – **Game Time** (10-15min)

- **Bun Shuffle**
 - Refer to game sheet for instructions

00:45 – **First Talk** (10min)

- Refer to Talk Sheet **"Self-Respect: Acknowledging why you are so important"**
- Make sure you are interactive and engaging. *Do not read directly off the talk sheet for the whole time.*

0:55 – **Saint Story or Testimony** (3-5min)

- Refer to **"Saint Stories"** or use a *personal testimony*

1:00 – **Encouragement Activity** (5-10 min)

- Best done in small groups
- Refer to **"Activities"** for assistance.

1:10 – **Small Groups** (15min)

- Refer to **"Small Group Questions"** for assistance.
- It may still be a lot of getting to know one another. Don't worry if it is still not very deep. The last one should be the deepest.

1:20 – Bathroom Break (3-5 min)

1:35 – **Game Time** (10-15min)

- **Two Extremes**
 - Refer to game sheet for instructions

1:50 – **Second Talk** (10min)

- Refer to talk sheet “**Friendship, Love, and Life**”
- Make sure you are interactive and engaging. *Do not read directly off the talk sheet for the whole time.*
- Draw on previous things that have happened that day!

2:00 – **Saint Story or Testimony** (3-5min)

- Refer to “**Saint Stories**” or use a *personal testimony*

2:05 – **Small Groups** (15min)

- Refer to “**Small Group Questions**” for assistance.

2:20 – LUNCH (45 min)

- Interact with them and continue that bond! *In other words, don't hide out during lunch....eat lunch **with your small group.***
- Have them use the restroom

3:05 – Fun Activity (15min)

- Students may need some free time to walk around and talk with each other. Some groups may need “regulated recreation” to get them moving. Do whatever your group needs.

3:20 – **Third Talk** (10min)

- Refer to talk sheet “**Understanding the changes we experience**”
- Finish with the Psalm 139 reading and reflection
- Transition from prayer with Psalm 139 to next talk on importance of prayer

3:30 – **Brief Sharing on Importance of Prayer** (3-5 min)

- Refer to talk sheet “**Importance of Prayer**”
- Keep it simple.

3:35 – **Prayer Time** (5-10 min)

- Students will need guidance as they pray though and follow along with the **Prayer Sheet**
- **Include 3-5 minutes of complete silence** during this activity by saying, “*Ok, now that we've done some talking to God and reading, let's together spend just 3 minutes in complete silence, LISTENING to what God is speaking to our hearts.*”

3:45 – **Encouragement Talk** (3-5 min)

- Refer to talk sheet “**Encouragement Talk**”

3:50 – Large group discussion/questions (5 min)

- Engage the large group in dialogue about what people learned and liked about this experience.

3:55 – Closing Prayer

- Close with a **Glory Be.**

Self-Respect: Acknowledging why you are so important

Objective:

This talk helps young people recognize how good they are—and how good God is! To encourage participation, this guide will have certain points that are meant to be questions for the students to answer and talk about during the class time. In addition, having several bibles available and marked before class starts will make it easier to draw students into participation by reading aloud.

Main Idea:

God cared a lot about all the things that He made, but most of all He cared about the people.

1. In the beginning, when God created the world and everything in it, He created the first people, Adam and Eve. Imagine how cool it must have been to live in the brand new world! (*Ad lib some thoughts on being the first people!*).
2. Every time that God created something new, He said **“This is good”**. What’s really cool is what God said when he made the first people, **“This is VERY good.”** In fact, when God decided to make people He said “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26).
3. In the very beginning, a very good God had a very good idea: “God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Wow. Even at the very beginning of time, God made us different—MALE AND FEMALE he created us!
4. **When God made us, MALE and FEMALE, it was a pretty good idea, because we are so different. That thing that makes us different is our sexuality. Sometimes the world gets confused about what our sexuality really is—but really, it’s the unique identity that each man and woman is born with—the gifts, talents, and characteristics which helps us to live and be the person we were created to be. If you have a brother or a sister, it’s easy to see how different we all are.**
5. As you get older, the opposite sex will get VERY interesting—but even now think about how being friends with a boy or a girl is neat, because of the way we are made.
6. God cared a lot about all the things that He made, but most of all He cared about the people. A very good God created people in His image, which means, that no matter what, people are very good! (Even when we make mistakes, even when we forget to share, and even when we forget how good we are.) Because we were made by a very good God, “For all things are yours...and you are Christ’s” (1 Corinthians 3:22).
7. **God wants us to know just how special we are, because He made us, and made sure to make each us especially full of gifts and talents, and likes and dislikes.** He really knows us. “Even the hairs of your head are numbered” (Luke 12:7).
8. *Is it good to remember how important you are?*
9. *Why is it good to remember how important you are?*

10. Remembering how important we are is called **“Self-respect”**. It’s good for us to remember our own dignity, but sometimes, we forget how important we really are. Maybe you have had a bad day, or maybe you got a bad grade on a test. When that happens, it’s easy to forget all the good stuff that God filled you with. ***Can you think of some people who like you, and love you, even when you make a mistake? (If the class is responsive, and time permits, hear a few and ask “Why do you think they love you?”)***
11. Sometimes people forget that they are loved, and do things that won’t make them happy. Some people try to do things to impress other people or to make friends. When they start drinking beer, or taking drugs, or gossiping, or paying too much attention to what they look like, or spending too much time with their boyfriend or girlfriend, or misusing their sexuality, they might be forgetting how important they are and mistaking those feelings for something else. ***Should we, as friends of Christ, do anything to encourage people who are sad and think that no one cares for them? What are some ways we can encourage and help our friends when this happens?***
12. As we work together to figure out why God made us so different as male and female, we need to learn more and more from Christ. Being male and female isn’t just about our bodies, it’s about all the things that makes male and female complimentary. We need to learn the kinds of love and friendship that are necessary to make life meaningful and good. We need to understand why God made our bodies and our hearts in the way that He did, and how we are to live wisely and will in a world in which so many people are very confused. ***What are some examples of shows on TV or movies that confuse people about sexuality and what’s really important?***
13. ***Who are the best people to teach us about sex and sexuality? This is a good place to bring in the importance of talking to their parents about sex and sexuality. Remind them you’ll be there to talk about some things, but they should be ok with talking with their parents about this as they have more questions. Is it easy for us to talk with them about important things?***
14. When you go home today, think about how God made you, and knows you so well. Thank God for all those things that make you special. Read Psalm 139 as a closing. If you can improvise, start with *“Imagine that God is speaking these words to you today”* and add their names into the blanks:

“I have looked deep into your heart and I know all about you. _____, I know when you sit and stand; I understand your thoughts from afar. _____, I notice everything you do and everywhere you go. _____, Before a word is on your tongue, I know what you will say. I will protect you. _____, there is no where that you can go to escape my sight. If you climb to the highest heavens, or to the lowest valleys, I will still be there. _____, I love you.”

Friendship, Love, and Life

Objective:

This talk helps young people understand that friendships teach us a lot about love and life. When we challenge young people to consider friendship, we are helping them to understand that chastity is an **appropriate expression of affection for a relationship**, thus preparing them to make good decisions about love and life in their future.

Main Idea:

Because God loves us so much, He gave us families to show us love and teach us how to love. Because God made us, He knew that we would want to have fun and share life with other people. In God's generous love, He gave us friends and from the example of Jesus, to show us how to be good friends and love unselfishly.

1. Everyone wants to have friends. Friends make the things that we do more fun, and it's much easier to put up with things that go wrong. **What are some things that you like to do with your friends?** (Don't spend too much time with this question, they will try to get off track!) Friendship is more than just about having fun right? There are different kinds of friendships, aren't there? There are the friends that live in your neighborhood, or the friends you have on the bus. There are friends that play on your soccer team, or in your dance class. There are friends that you have in this class too. Some people choose friends because of where they live, or because they are fun to be around, or because they have a swimming pool, or their mom makes the best cookies. Maybe they choose a friend because they are good at math, or because they have the newest video games. There are lots of reasons why people choose friends.
2. Good friends also help us to be good people. **Tell me about some qualities of a good friend.** As you look at this list, ask yourself if YOU have any of these qualities. To have good friends, you have to be a good friend. As you grow up, it's really important to have good friends and to be a good friend. A good friend has a caring heart (and use some other words from the list that they made).
3. **Where do we learn how to be a good friend?** (from our families) In our families, we learn how to love other people. **Tell me what you know about love.**
4. There are different kinds of love, right? (Use the board, or the attached pictures to help explain this.) There's family love. **What do you know about family love? How is that expressed?** (ex. Mom doing our laundry, brother sharing) From our families, we learn about friendship love. You all know a lot about friendship love? **How is that expressed?** (ex. Friend sharing peanut butter sandwich when you forget your lunch, someone standing up for you when you're being teased) It's okay for a boy and a girl to be friends, too. Sometimes, when a boy and a girl are friends, the friendship love might grow into something really neat. As they get older, their friendship love might grow into "LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE"-the romantic love that people write songs about and send valentines for. You know the kind. Eventually, that love might become married love .
5. Married love is special because God created it to cover all kinds of love. Married love is expressed in a special way between a man and a woman. It's so special that this love can

create a family, and family love starts all over again. Since marriage is a sacrament, we know that God has a special plan for this.

- 6. *So what do you think the biggest kind of love is?*** God-love, or Agape, is the biggest kind of love, and it is part of all the other kinds of love. You see, God MADE love, and because God loved us first, we can love others. Because God loves us so much, He gave us families to show us love and teach us how to love. Because God made us, He knew that we would want to have fun and share life with other people. So He gave us friends and from the example of Jesus, shows us how to be good friends. And some of you will get married someday, and you will experience that special kind of love that is for married people—that love is a forever love. Some of you might not get married. Some of you might be priests or religious. Your married love will be a little different, because you will live love in a different way.
- 7. *How do we learn to love others?*** Well, we can learn a lot about loving others from 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.
- 8. *What are some things that can spoil love?*** (Selfishness, impatience, etc.) Pure hearts help to protect love. Chastity is a word that describes having a pure heart and mind. God knows that love is best when it's patient and unselfish, and He sent the Holy Spirit to help us live that. Chastity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. When we live chastely, we protect the love that God made.

Understanding the Changes We Experience

Objective:

This talk helps young people understand that change is part of human life....and as we change, we can expect those around us to be changing also (and notice our changes!). This talk helps build empathy, compassion, understanding, and acceptance (of ourselves and others).

Main Idea:

God is close to us in all of the changes we experience, and we can be close to Him too.

Introduction: *Growing up is tough.* What are some things that you can do now that you couldn't do when you were 1? 5? 7? 10? (Don't spend too much time with this question, they will try to get off track!)

1. There are a lot of different ways that a person can grow. ***What are some of those ways?*** (physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, intellectually) The most obvious changes are physical, but they have a big impact on everything else.
2. Today we're going to talk about some of those changes, and try to figure out ways to view these changes as God intended them. There are two things that we really need to have to make it through these changes. ***Can anyone guess what they are?*** Patience and understanding. These changes happen at different rates for every person, and everyone acts differently...think about what it would be like to be the tallest kid or the shortest kids in your class.
3. We need patience as we deal with those changes in our own lives, and as we wait for others to catch up. We need understanding as we deal with those changes in other people, and we can learn both of these things from Jesus. Jesus said, ***"I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly"*** (John 10:10). If we follow Jesus, we will be able to understand the changes we experience and have a fuller life.
4. As we mature in our life of faith, we not only learn more about God, but we are able to become His friends. In prayer and in the sacraments, Jesus touches our lives deeply. We can actually get to know God. That changes things.
5. Let's talk about some of those changes. ***Do you think that the changes that we go through make a difference in the relationships in our lives? With parents and brothers and sisters? With friends? (Try to get some examples from them about these things...) Do these changes make a difference in our relationship with God?***
6. People who knew Jesus, and saw him grow up too, realized how important prayer was to him. They asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray." ***Have you learned to pray in a more meaningful way, since you are older? Are you mature enough to occasionally give longer periods of time to prayer? What are some of to prayer? Say? What are some ways to prayer?*** In a little bit, we're going to try praying in a different way, so it's okay if it's awkward!
7. Let's think about some the changes that we experience, and remember that Jesus went through them too. Since praying isn't just about saying "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys", we're going to try to pray in a different way. Remember, it's alright to be different. So right now, we are going to go back to Psalm 139 and spend some quiet time, talking to God in our hearts about the changes we experience.

Psalm
139

You have looked deep into my heart, LORD,
and **you know all about me.**

You know when I am resting or when I am working,
and from heaven you discover my thoughts.

You notice everything I do and everywhere I go.

Before I even speak a word, you know what I will say,
and with your powerful arm you protect me from every side.

I can't understand all of this!

Such wonderful knowledge is far above me.

Where could I go to escape from your Spirit or from your sight?

If I were to climb up to the highest heavens, you would be there.

If I were to dig down to the world of the dead you would also be there.

Suppose I had wings like the dawning day and flew across the ocean.

Even then your powerful arm would guide and protect me.

Or suppose I said, "I'll hide in the dark until night comes to cover me over."

But you see in the dark because daylight and dark are all the same to you.

You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body,
and I praise you because of the **wonderful way** you created me.

Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt.

Nothing about me is hidden from you!

I was secretly woven together deep in the earth below,
but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed.

Even before I was born, you had written in your book
everything I would do.

Your thoughts are far beyond my understanding,
much more than I could ever imagine.

I try to count your thoughts, but they outnumber
the grains of sand on the beach.

And when I awake, I will find you nearby.

fearfully
and
Wonderfully
made
by
God

The Importance of Prayer

Objective:

This talk is brief and clear—before sending youth into prayer, they need some guidelines on “the what and how to”.

Main Idea:

Prayer sustains us and is our communication with God.

Key Points:

1. If you made a list of ways to build a good friendship, what would it include?

- *Making time for each other, aka “doing stuff”*
- *Sharing similar interests*
- *Talking to each other AND listening to each other*

2. A classic definition of prayer is:

“Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God” (CCC 2590)

In other words, it’s more than just what we say or do—it’s about what we think and feel. It’s like a good friendship.

3. Just as friendship is more about affection than about knowing everything, prayer is a matter of the heart—when we allow ourselves to open up our hearts in friendship to God, we can hear God’s voice within us saying “I love you!”

4. JUST DO IT....when you really want to get to know someone, it is easy to get caught up in worrying about saying the right words and doing the right things. You can’t “mess up” prayer...God knows you and loves you too much! So here’s a simple way to start:

(Pass out the Prayer Sheets and briefly go over the following)

- **Acknowledge:** *Take some time to acknowledge what is going on in your heart and mind right now. There is nothing going on in your heart that God is not interested in, so just take some time to quiet down.*
- **Relate:** *Now share what’s going on in your heart and mind with God. This is the ‘you talk to God’ part. You can do this by writing it down, or speaking to God in the silence of your heart. If you are thankful, thank Him...if you are scared, tell Him about it...if you are happy, tell Him why. The most important part of this is that you are honest with Him; don’t just tell Him what you think He wants to hear...be authentic and share with Him like you would with a friend.*
- **Receive:** *Now is the time to listen and receive whatever God desires to give you in response to what you have shared with Him. If you have fully shared your heart, you are in a place to listen and receive. This can be difficult because it requires us to wait and sometimes learn to hear His voice! Try sitting for a few moments and then read this passage: Luke 12:7-8*
“Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God.”
- **Jesus invites us to come to Him with everything!** *God knows us so well—and loves us so much, that He wants us to be courageous in loving others and sharing our love for Him....Why would Jesus invite us to this and tell us “Do not be afraid”? What would Jesus’ prayer time have been like? Did He totally trust the Father with everything? What types of things would He have prayed for? What do you think the Father told Jesus in His prayer time? What do you think the Father and Jesus want to say to you right now?*
- **Respond:** *This is a time to respond to what you have just received. Responding in this way should be natural, just as it’s natural to say thank you when someone gives you a gift....you may also want to respond in other ways:*

Encouragement Talk

Objective:

This talk is short and upbeat—the final encouragement in living this Catholic Vision of Love.

Main Idea:

Young people can make all the difference in the world.

Key Points:

Today was great, right?

1. **God wants us to have happy and full lives....how do we live happy lives?**
 - Through the love of God we find joy and peace.
 - We must love ourselves because God created us and loves us!
 - Because we are God’s creation and loved by Him, we are good!
 - We must love one another.
 - The love that comes from Christ is meant to be shared with others!
 - He will continue to love us through others as well!

2. We learn to love others by taking on the **Catholic Vision of Love—a love that is like Jesus, a love that is hung on the cross.** As Jesus said, ***“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”*** (John 15:13)

3. Even when change and challenges seem tough, He loves us and gives us a way to love Him more through it.
 - a. It is not always easy, but it is worth it!
 - b. Jesus said, ***“I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly”*** (John 10:10). If we follow Jesus, we will be able to understand the changes we experience and have a fuller life.
 - c. God wants us to be happy! He wants us to be full of joy and grow closer to Him. He gave us a few pointers called the Beatitudes. Beatitude means “blessed” or “happy.” So let’s all read and pray the Beatitudes together...

Guidelines for Facilitating Small Groups

The facilitator's role is to help a group to its best thinking and sharing. A good facilitator is helpful when a group is trying to deal with new or difficult issues. If you accept the role of facilitator you must be neutral. You should also use the following techniques.

Begin with Prayer & Ice breaker

Introduce yourself as the facilitator and lay the groundwork for sharing by saying ***"We are here tonight to share, not to judge or gossip. Please respect yourself and the other people in this group by not sharing what other people say outside of the group. What you say is important—so we will all listen to you."*** Ask the other members of the group to go around and share their name and something about themselves (like favorite ice cream flavor, or deodorant brand, etc). Begin with a simple prayer--as simple as ***"Lord, we invite you to join us today in this group and guide our words and thoughts to help us grow closer to you."***

Watch group vibes: If people seem bored or inattentive, you may have to speed up the pace of the meeting. If people seem tense because of unvoiced disagreements, you may have to bring concerns out into the open.

Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak: Invite quiet people to speak. If necessary, use the clock: ***"We have ten minutes left. I think we should hear from people who haven't spoken for a while."***

Another way to get quiet people to speak is to initiate a round, in which you move around the table, with everyone getting a few minutes to present their views.

Encourage open discussion: Try to encourage people to speak up if they seem reluctant to disagree with a speaker: ***"On difficult issues, people disagree. Does anyone have a different point of view?"*** Another way to encourage open discussion is to ask participants to avoid using critical language for a period of time.

Draw people out with open-ended questions: Open-ended questions require more than a yes / no answer. Some examples: ***"We seem to be having trouble here. What do you think we should do?"*** ***"Could you say more about that?"*** ***"What do you mean when you say . . . ?"***

Inject humor: Humor is one of the best ways of improving the tone of meetings. It makes meetings seem like friendly get-togethers. It's ok for small group time to be light and fun too!

Paraphrase: When you paraphrase, you try to restate briefly the point that someone has just made: ***"Let me see if I'm understanding you . . ."*** If paraphrasing doesn't convince a person that he or she has been heard, you may have to repeat what was said verbatim.



5th Grade Retreat
Small Group Questions

Please note that these questions are simply a guideline if you are having trouble coming up with questions within your small group.

Feel free to use them or come up with your own questions especially in the first small group meeting.

Remember that if a student says something that indicates that they or someone else is in danger, it is your responsibility to report it to someone in authority.

Opening small group

1. What is your name and if you could be any animal which one would you be and why?
2. What are your expectations for today? Any fears/worries, or joys/excitements?
3. How would you describe your relationship with God? Using a scale of 1-10 and explain why. Where would you like it to be, and how can you get there?

Small group after talk #1

1. What stuck out to you most in the talk and why?
2. Why do you think self-esteem and the ability to love yourself is so important?
3. Do you think your ability to love yourself will affect the way you can love others and receive their love? Will it affect the way you love God and the way you receive His love? Why?
4. How did you feel after reading what people wrote about you? How can you help others build their self-esteem every day?

Small group after talk #2

1. What stuck out to you most in the talk and why?
2. What is so important about friendship?
3. What makes a bad friend?
4. What makes a good friend?
5. How can/do you love people differently? And is that OK?

St. Joseph of Cupertino

Feast Day: September 18

Born: 1603 :: **Died:** 1663

Joseph was born in a small Italian village to poor parents. He was very unhappy as a boy and a teenager. His mother thought he was a big nuisance so she shouted at him often and was very strict with him.

Joseph soon became very slow and absent-minded. He would wander around as if he were going nowhere. But he had a bad temper, too, and so not many people liked him.

He tried to learn the trade of shoe-making, but failed. He asked if he could become a Franciscan priest, but they did not want him. He then managed to join the Capuchin order, but eight months later he was asked to leave.

He could not seem to do anything right. He dropped piles of dishes and kept forgetting to do what he was told. His mother was not at all pleased to have the eighteen-year-old Joseph back home again.

She finally convinced the Franciscan monastery to take him on as a helper. He was given the Franciscan habit to wear and was assigned to care for the horses.

About this time, Joseph began to change. He grew more humble and gentle. He became more careful and successful at his work. He also began to do more penance.

The Franciscans finally decided to let him become a member of the order and he started studying to become a priest. Although he was very good, he still had a hard time with studies. But Joseph trusted in God's help and he did become a priest.

God began to work miracles through Father Joseph. Over seventy times people saw him rise from the ground while saying Mass or praying. He would balance near the ceiling like a star at the top of a Christmas tree.

Often he went into ecstasy (where you do not see or hear the people around you) and would be completely wrapped up in talking with God. He became very holy. Everything he saw made him think of God.

Father Joseph became so famous for his miracles that he was kept hidden. This made him happy for the chance to be alone with his beloved Jesus who always stayed close to him until he died in 1663.

The life of this saint can help us to understand that to be holy or close to God we do not need people to praise us for our talents and abilities which are a free gift from God. ¹

Note: St. Joseph Cupertino never gave up and even though he wasn't the smartest kid, with hard work and devout prayer, he was able to pass the tests and become a priest! We all have so much potential and beauty, and if we really look at ourselves, it is not that hard to find. Let's see what others have to say about us, and maybe that will help us to see our strengths!

¹ http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/kids/saints/0918_cupertino.asp

St. Therese of Lisieux

Feast Day: October 1
Born: 1873 :: **Died:** 1897

St. Therese of Lisieux, (St. Teresa of the Child Jesus) who was often called the Little Flower, was born in Normandy in France. She had four older sisters and her parents were Louis and Zelig Martin. Theresa was a very lively, lovable little girl and her father called her his "little queen."

Yet she could also be too sensitive and irritable. In the story she wrote of her life, she tells how the Infant Jesus helped her overcome this weakness.

Theresa wanted very much to enter the Carmelite convent where two of her sisters were already nuns. But since she was only fifteen, they did not let her.

Theresa felt sure that Jesus wanted her to spend her life loving him alone. She kept praying and asking the superior to let her join the convent. She even dared to ask Pope Leo XIII himself to grant her heart's desire and finally she was allowed to enter.

Although she was only fifteen, Theresa did not expect to be treated like a child. "Obedience, prayer and sacrifice" were her duty. She had a thirst to suffer for love of God.

Theresa had the spiritual courage of a real heroine. "May Jesus make me a martyr of the heart or of the body-or better, both!" she wrote. And she meant it.

In winter she suffered from the bitter cold and dampness of her plain bedroom. There were other kinds of sufferings, too. Whenever she was made fun of or insulted, she would offer her pain to her beloved Jesus. She would hide her hurts under a smile. She told Jesus to do with her whatever was his will.

Sister Theresa tried hard to be humble. She called her great belief in God her "little way" to holiness. She always had a burning desire to become a saint.

The young nun wanted to find a "short cut," an to take her quickly to heaven. So she looked in the Bible, and found the words, "Whoever is a little one, come to me."

When she lay dying, she could say: "I have never given the good God anything but love, and it is with love that he will repay.

After my death, I will let fall a shower of roses. I will spend my heaven doing good on earth." The Little Flower died on September 30, 1897.

"O Jesus, my love, my vocation, at last I have found it. My vocation is LOVE!"²

Note: She did not focus on the big things, but doing all the little things with love. Every friendship, every interaction, was filled with love and that is what made her an amazing saint! You don't have to do huge, amazing things to show someone you love them.

² http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/kids/saints/1001_theresa.asp

“Scoot It” Shuffle

Arrange chairs in a big circle. Choose someone from the group to be 'it', and that person stands in the middle of the circle. Have the rest of the group sit on the chairs, and make sure you have one spare chair.

The aim of the game is for people sitting down to prevent the person that is 'it' to take a seat.

They do this by shuffling or “scoot it” left or right to occupy the empty chair before the person who is 'it' can sit down.

Players are only allowed to move left or right (ie. not run across the circle).

Eventually once the person who is 'it' gets a seat, the person to their left or right (whoever was slowest) becomes 'it'.

For bigger groups, you may need to have two or three empty seats.¹

¹http://www.jubed.com/youth_ministry/view/Bun-shuffle/

Encouragement Activity

Goal: To help young people recognize their worth and value, as well as reveal the power of their words in encouraging others.

This activity works best in smaller groups.

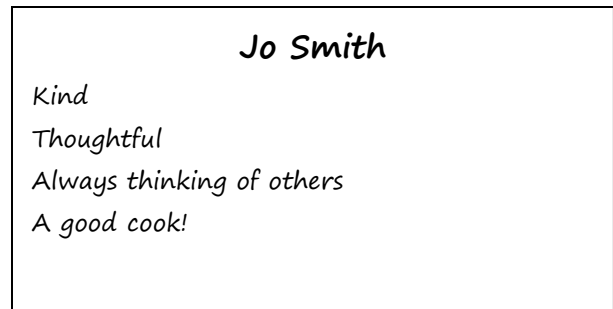
Resources: Note card or sheet of paper for each participant, and pen.

Process:

1. Sit in a circle and give everyone a piece of paper and pen.
2. Each person should write their name at the top of the piece of paper, then pass it to the person on their left.
3. Each person then writes one or two (or more) positive characteristics about the person who's name is at the top of the paper.
4. After 30-60 seconds, everyone passes the pieces of paper around to their left again.
5. This continues until everyone has written on everyone else's paper.

A typical piece of paper would look like this:

6. The final step is that everyone receives their piece of paper back again. Done well, this is an incredibly affirming game and can be a night that people literally remember for years to come.



Variations:

Another variation of this is to use a large piece of cardboard per person (rather than a sheet of paper) - this way people can stick the cardboard in their room as a constant reminder of how they are loved!²

² http://www.jubed.com/youth_ministry/view/Encouragement-Game

Two Extremes

A game of two extremes! This is a simple ice breaker to get people up and moving and sharing their preferences or views on topics.

Create an imaginary line from one end of the room to the other. Instruct people to move to a point on the line to indicate where they stand on a particular issue.

For example - move to the left hand side of the room if you like **chocolate**, the right hand side if you like **strawberry**.

If people don't have a strong opinion they stand in the middle.

Continue with other examples / extremes:

- Fold toilet paper or Scrunch
 - Sleep in or Get up Early?
 - Big party or intimate dinner?
 - Dance or Alternative Music
 - Would you rather go to the football or a concert
 - The pub or night club (for young adults or older!)
 - Sweet or Savory
 - Do homework or do the dishes
 - Facebook or Twitter
 - Summer or Winter
 - Surf or Skate
 - Would you rather be beautiful or smart?
 - Be taller or shorter?
- When everyone chooses a position, read out the next one and everyone moves again. Kids love to express themselves so this is a good game to get them to explore and express their opinions on some things.³

³ http://www.jubed.com/youth_ministry/view/Two-extremes/?s=9,46,23

Blessed Are You...

Acknowledge: Take some time to acknowledge what is going on in your heart and mind right now. There is nothing going on in your heart that God is not interested in, so just take some time to quiet down.

Relate: Now share what's going on in your heart and mind with God. This is the 'you talk to God' part. You can do this by writing it down, or speaking to God in the silence of your heart. If you are thankful, thank Him...if you are scared, tell Him about it...if you are happy, tell Him why. The most important part of this is that you are honest with Him; don't just tell Him what you think He wants to hear...be authentic and share with Him like you would with a friend.

Receive: Now is the time to listen and receive whatever God desires to give you in response to what you have shared with Him. If you have fully shared your heart, you are in a place to listen and receive. This can be difficult because it requires us to wait and sometimes learn to hear His voice! Try sitting for a few moments and then read this passage: **Luke 12:7-8**

“Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God.”

Jesus invites us to come to Him with everything! God knows us so well—and loves us so much, that He wants us to be courageous in loving others and sharing our love for Him....Why would Jesus invite us to this and tell us “Do not be afraid”? What would Jesus' prayer time have been like? Did He totally trust the Father with everything? What types of things would He have prayed for? What do you think the Father told Jesus in His prayer time? What do you think the Father and Jesus want to say to you right now?

You might want to read the Beatitudes at this time as well...Matthew 5:3-16

Respond: This is a time to respond to what you have just received. Responding in this way should be natural, just as it's natural to say thank you when someone gives you a gift....you may also want to respond in other ways:

What are some ways in which you are blessed? How can you be more thankful?



The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

-Matthew 5:3-16